

Harmful Sexual Behaviour – Staff Guide

All children have a right to be safe from abuse and have a right to an education. Safeguarding children is a responsibility shared by everyone in contact with children and young people. This guidance provides Tutors and staff working with children and young people with practical tools to prevent and respond to instances of peer sexual abuse, exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour taking place both inside and out of the settings. This includes digital abuse and exploitation. All staff need to prevent and respond to instances of peer sexual abuse, exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour, so that all children and young people who attend education/further learning can realise their right to be safe and their right to an education.

Sexual abuse **Child sexual abuse** involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening, including: physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts; noncontact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Child Sexual Abuse is an umbrella term and includes Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Is a form of sexual abuse that can include sex or any form of sexual activity with a child; the production of indecent images and/or any other indecent material involving children. Involves a child. It occurs to those up to the age of 18 years old. Involves some form of exchange. The exchange can include the giving or withdrawal of something; such as the withdrawal of violence or threats to abuse another person. There may be a facilitator who receives something in addition to or instead of the child who is exploited. Children may not recognise the exploitative nature of the relationship or exchange. Children may feel that they have given consent.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour **Harmful Sexual Behaviours (HSB)** can be defined as: sexual behaviours expressed by children and young people under the age of 18 that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards themselves or others or be abusive towards another child, young person or adult. This definition of HSB includes both contact and non-contact behaviours (grooming, exhibitionism, voyeurism and sexting or recording images of sexual acts via smart phones or social media applications).

Sexual harassment In the context of this guidance, sexual harassment is defined as: “persistent unwanted conduct of a sexual nature by a child towards another child that can occur online and offline. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child’s dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.”

Any staff working with students/learners are advised to refer to the following guidance:

[NSPCC Guide on Child Sexual Exploitation \(CSE\)](#)

[Government guide on sexting and sharing nudes](#)

[NSPCC How to prevent Harmful Sexual Behaviour](#)

[NSPCC Protecting from Online Abuse](#)

[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

[Working Together to Safeguard Children](#)

#ItsNotOk

#ExpectRespect

Sexual abuse can happen between children of any age and sex and takes many forms along a continuum ranging from sexual harassment through to contact sexual abuse, including peer sexual exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour. Peer sexual abuse involves children of similar ages/year groups whereas other types of harmful sexual behaviour will involve a large difference in age. Increasingly, peer sexual abuse is taking place through digital platforms, which makes it more complex for education settings to tackle.

Sexual behaviours range from those that are developmentally expected, consensual and exploratory to those that are violent and highly abusive, with many types of behaviours in between. Be as specific as possible when describing the nature of the behaviour under discussion, rather than resorting to overly generalised terms. The following continuum shows the range and definitions within the umbrella term harmful sexual behaviour:

Normal	Inappropriate	Problematic	Abusive	Violent
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developmentally expected• Socially acceptable• Consensual, mutual, reciprocal• Shared decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour• Socially acceptable behaviour within peer group• Context for behaviour may be inappropriate• Generally consensual and reciprocal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Problematic and concerning behaviours• Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected• No overt elements of victimisation• Consent issues may be unclear• May lack reciprocity or equal power• May include levels of compulsivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Victimising intent or outcome• Includes misuse of power• Coercion and force to ensure victim compliance• Intrusive• Informed consent lacking, or not able to be freely given by victim• May include elements of expressive violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physically violent sexual abuse• Highly intrusive• Instrumental violence which is physiologically and/or sexually arousing to the perpetrator• Sadism

Hackett, S (2010). *Children, young people and sexual violence*.

Tutors/staff may also find the Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool helpful in identifying sexual behaviours within certain age categories. The Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light tool provides guidance that is age and developmentally appropriate, positive and protective. The tool uses the categories of green, orange and red light to help adults identify, understand and respond to children and young people's sexual behaviours by age range. The tool can be used by a wide range of professionals including schools, early childhood education and care centres, health professionals, social workers, psychologists and may also be used by families.

<https://www.brook.org.uk/training/wider-professional-training/sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool/>

Sexual harassment

Education professionals may encounter reports of the following behaviours inside/outside their settings:

- sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names;
- sexual 'jokes' or taunting;
- physical behaviour, such as: deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes, displaying pictures, videos, photos or drawings of a sexual nature.. Staff should be considering when any of this crosses a line into sexual violence (it is important to talk to and consider the experience of the victim).

When considering incidents of this nature, it is important to identify if the behaviour is isolated or forms part of a recurring pattern. While isolated incidents could be qualified as inappropriate behaviour, a recurring pattern of sexual harassment could be an indicator of problematic behaviour as per the Hackett continuum. In the context of this guidance, sexual harassment is defined as ‘persistent unwanted conduct of a sexual nature’ by a child towards another child that can occur online and offline. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a persons dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

Digital sexual abuse and harassment

Young people increasingly experience abuse and exploitation online and/or digitally. A proportion of sexual harassment described in the previous section will happen online and/ or digitally. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence. It may include: – non-consensual sharing of sexual images and videos. The UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS) has produced detailed advice for schools and colleges on this. – sexualised online bullying; – unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media; and – coercion and threats.

[UK Council for Internet Safety](#)

Responsibilities of staff

Schools and colleges have a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children at their school/college. This includes a duty on education professionals to report a child at risk if they have reasonable cause to suspect the child is at risk. A child at risk is defined as a child at risk of or experiencing abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm, and has needs for care and support. Education settings should have regard to the following statutory and practice guidance: Working together to Safeguarding Children, Keeping Children Safe in Education (both of which are referenced to within the Sysco group safeguarding and prevent strategy).

Children and young people who have experienced peer sexual abuse, exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour should be supported to speak out, listened to and able to access the help they need, both in and out of education settings. Based on consultation with a wide range of professionals, the NSPCC has put together tips for professionals on how to engage sensitively and effectively with a child in the moment of a disclosure.

<https://www.barnardos.org.uk/resources-help-identify-and-engage-young-people-risk-sexual-abuse-and-exploitation>

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2019/let-children-know-you-re-listening>

Respectful relationships, well-being and safeguarding should be at the heart of the education journey for the student/learner. Early intervention will also be key to successful prevention and response to peer sexual abuse, exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour. In particular, education settings should promote a culture where sexual bullying and harassment, digital and off line, is never tolerated and dismissed as ‘banter’.

The Sysco group continue to promote awareness on ‘Harmful Sexual Behaviour’ through hot topics, enrichment sessions/material, discussions at reviews/sessions, posters and promoting our straplines.

Further Promotion

In order to further raise awareness on Harmful Sexual Behaviour we will be displaying posters in all our education settings. These will include our two straplines that you may have seen on page one of this guidance;

#ItsNotOk

Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence #ItsNotOk

#ExpectRespect

Healthy Relationships #ExpectRespect

As staff we ask you to continue to raise awareness on the topics you have read today and also promote and discuss with all students/learners. If you have any questions or would like further information please contact a member of the safeguarding team.



#itsnotok...
To be treated as an
object and not an
individual

WE HAVE ZERO TOLERANCE FOR

UNWELCOME SEXUAL GESTURES OR INNUENDOS

UNWELCOME

SOMEONE WHO TOUCHES YOU WITHOUT CONSENT

DEROGATORY COMMENTS BASED ON SOMEONE'S AGE, GENDER, RACE, ORIENTATION, ABILITY

GROPING, PINCHING, OR SMACKING SOMEONE'S BODY

COMMENTS WITH A SEXUAL OVERTONE

#@%!!! \$#&*

EXPECT RESPECT

